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POETIC POLYPHONY

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis suggests harmoniousness as well as independence. The poems included in Poetic Polyphony are a multiplicity of sounds, like an echo. Also, like an echo, these sounds vary in tone.

Poetic Polyphony is not the result of a pre-conceived idea. No particular subject or belief or feeling was selected to be written about. There is, however, a detectable melody which runs throughout the poetry and it emphasizes the importance of man as an individual.

The poems are not descriptive in the sense that they are about stones, flowers, or seashells. They are poems that describe feelings, moods, and thoughts with which most or all of us have had some experience.

The poems are arranged chronologically because they do not fit into particular categories. The changes or variations in tone are, however, possibly more evident because of this arrangement. The tone varies from rebellion to contemplation to introspection, but not necessarily in that order. Actually, these changes overlap or are inter-twined like a spider's web, thus emphasizing the harmonizing qualities of the poetry.

Certain words are used repeatedly throughout these poems. "One" and "all" are such words. Frequently, "one" means "many"; whereas, "all" sometimes denotes "one." How these words are used depends upon the poem

in which they appear. Occasionally, verbs are used as nouns; for example, "each is an is" or "they clutch their have."

The poems are succinct and delicate. There is a hint of sadness about them. They are statements or comments, rather than questions and answers.

The poetry goes beyond just stressing the importance of the individual. It emphasizes the necessity for true individuality. The world is becoming so systematized, committee-conscious, and materialistic that man himself is fast becoming a commodity.

Man seems to be more concerned with being acceptable to others, being a joiner, getting ahead, making a dollar, and buying appliances. Strength of character and strength of purpose seem to have fallen by the wayside. The individual is caught in the middle because he wants to be understood as well as to maintain his own identity.

If anything, Poetic Polyphony speaks for the individual. It suggests the dangers of being caught up in a system. The apparent disregard for principles, for understanding, and for self is becoming more and more evident. Man seems to have lost the strength which can come only from within himself.

The need for inner strength is stressed throughout the poems because there are times when only the individual is touched by a feeling or a happening. When such things do occur, he must out of necessity depend upon himself.

Some of the poems suggest that those individuals who lack inner strength ultimately dissipate their talents, destroy themselves, or

remove themselves from the confusion of the world.

These poems emphasize the fact, though subtly at times, that the individual must maintain a certain amount of independence or aloofness in order to live rather than just exist.

It has been said that a completed poem is often very different from the poet's original idea. It can also happen that the poet and the reader do not realize what a poem "says" until quite sometime after it has been written.

Today's concept of Poetic Polyphony has been presented in this introduction. Tomorrow could bring a different meaning. That a poem can evoke various responses or interpretations is one of its most exciting qualities.

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## ONE, TWO

We are two yet alike  
Our appreciation is interchanged  
Yet one not at all parallel  
Is too dull to respond  
And I can only enclasp you with words.

## ALL AND ONE

As a newborn sees  
so do they  
who judge  
yet stand apart  
all as one  
because of fear.

And one as one  
must pay twofold  
for being  
because  
silence is sorrow and joy  
never knowing,  
always seeking.

## BY WAY OF

Moving as many  
we journey  
toward completeness,

trying to flee  
the fear  
of aloneness,

hoping to evolve  
an end  
to looseness,

assuming that any  
to all  
is happiness,

finding the finish  
by being  
a oneness.

## THE SYSTEM

Clinging, clutching  
the mass mingles.

Screaming, scratching  
like frightened fugitives.

Bawling, bullying  
those who question.

The pit is without end.

Seething, scheming.  
Swaying, swinging.

They cling to the darkness.  
They clutch their have.

## THE PHARISEES

On a pebble-path  
I walk and wait  
for sounds.

And I know that  
various-colored voices  
have not forgotten  
and follow me there.

Many times before I have  
waited wondering  
what would  
be said.

And always I  
have heard,

"The distance is near."

But now I  
walk wandering  
seeking something  
yet knowing not what.

Will the noises  
vibrate?

Again I go away  
not to return  
nor retain.

## TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Each is estimated by the familiar-sure.

The only is enclosed by walls  
like a room  
and this is pleasing.

Truth is there  
shut away from everything  
by form.

In diverse directions  
the ones cannot move  
because  
the desirable disjoins  
each from what is.

The snug do not  
penetrate the perfect  
to value the valid,  
the not unspotted.

## THE SOUTH

I walk barefooted in gentle just-plowed fields.

I see gray shanties and white-pillared greathouses.

I do not come to see or feel.

I hear  
shadow-voices moan  
and plinking banjo sounds  
and solemn fiddles whine.

This drone fills the heart  
of the soul  
of the land.

Dull is the beat  
and steady.

The melody becomes drawn  
and long  
and lazy.

It comes casually.  
It clings  
and lingers  
like a speechless summer night  
dissolved in warm honeysuckle.

It is soft and warm,  
then it cries out  
like a new babe  
torn from its darkness.

The sounds of this place  
surge and sweep  
and fill.

And days melt into days.

## STAINS OF SPRING

Spring is the return  
from ever-existence  
to the longed for life  
of drifting.

Only then is a moment more  
full than  
an empty spirit.

It flows out over  
all  
like the flighty sun  
on a receptive sea.

The glow flows.  
It spreads  
like stains of blood  
on a heated surface.

It melts quickly,  
and  
fades into the  
familiar void.



## THE PASSING

Darkness dawns  
and light becomes lost.

I hear singing.

There is a faded merging of all.  
And the actual is shaded.

I hear hushed singing.

Shape loses shape.

Each becomes formless  
and fuses into dark confusion.

I hear no singing.

All is silent shadow.

## DEATH

Shadow-forms sit  
and chairs creak  
while  
time dissolves  
bringing anythings.

Here,  
days are like a  
just-struck match  
in the wind.

The glow vanishes  
quickly  
leaving nothings.

After,  
in the emptiness  
shadow-forms sit  
and chairs creak.

Another passed!

Then,  
hear mournful sighs  
of stunted existence.

The existing through yesterdays.

## CYCLIC

They cry out against what is.  
They linger on the known pushing concepts.

They are soul-scortched  
and people-bound.

Within  
A flame smolders  
and creeps.

It leaps through and out.  
Its fingers consume all.

It touches what is.

Then  
It grows into  
a thing to be discarded,  
ridiculed,  
trampled down.

Time persists  
but  
the flame flickers.

The unwritten passes  
from body and space  
to the parasite.

And again  
They cry out against what is.

## FOG-RISE

On a beach

I stand and listen to  
mute water sounds.

I walk and my form  
pushes aside  
the vaporous night.

I stand and hear  
silent shouts from the sea.

I see  
silver tinsel sand  
gently exposed  
by the misty moon.

I know there is light  
where I once stood.

But, now

I am enclosed  
by a hazed darkness.

I look back  
from another world.

At fog-rise  
I will find my way.

## TOMORROW

What is breath?

Dissolve it with cold heat.  
Erase it like chalked-words  
on a narrow board.

Let the dust remain  
because it is not forgetful.

When the essential appears  
you are unaware  
and are liquified.

Until then,  
seek the volatile vision  
and ignore the  
understood.

Pain you ponder  
though happiness is here.

Think of other things.

## ALL IS NEVER

Moments are merged in seeking the entire.

The actual converge  
to create the complete.

Yet,  
each is an is  
and  
doubts are deathless.

Can echoes evolve the all  
when never is perfect?

The broad is narrow  
and each is always.

Everything is not yet  
so  
all is never.

## FAREWELL

Each says more than much.

I wait in grey  
and my back  
is turned.

Then, black light  
leans over my shoulder.

We do not speak.

I stand silently  
and let moments walk away.

I stand silently  
and the distance becomes more.

Now, that moment of light  
is unapproached.

It is lost in a guise  
with its back to me.

Shall I stand silently  
and try to unlearn form?

I choose to turn away.

## ANTICIPATION

Move toward the faceless figure.  
Examine the exposed.

Then, an undercurrent ebbs,  
then ripples,  
then swells,

and feeling becomes fluent.

A subtle spirit  
finds form  
in the seed  
of the profound.

You see confession,  
and feel the intangible.

To see the strange and baseless,  
you must feel.

Search the cool shade  
of the soul  
and find motion.

Is that knowing the unknown?

You do not answer.



## 9 Lives

I hold death  
in my hands.

I do not feel.

I do not see.

It came quietly  
and went inside.

Spreading, it  
enveloped  
and consumed.

First, a wild  
thrashing and  
much motion.

Then, gently,  
gently, softly,  
it pushes life  
downward.

Finally, the  
calm sigh goes  
and only  
death remains.

## A TEAR CAUGHT

My arms rise  
and push outward  
through a mist.

I stare backward  
and the tangible  
stands in its littleness.

Its promise is like  
a tear caught within  
which magnifies  
with each breath.

Now,  
there is no vision.  
Time is without motion  
and there is lack  
in the existent.

My eyes are clouded  
by a formless dream beyond now  
because  
the giant smallness  
has been used by faded years.

My heart sobs at the waste  
when I reach out  
to touch memory.

## NEED

Being near but without  
forces the soul  
to search for reply to response  
and the wistful heart  
to ask for relief.

When the benumbed truth  
touches and grasps  
that formless force  
the pain is salved  
by contentment  
and weakness.

Fancy finds little fullness  
because  
there is no echo  
to its shouts.

The real becomes as entangled  
as the branches  
of too close trees  
that cry out in pain  
when they are moved in discord  
by the wind.

## RESPONSE

Glance touches glance  
and teardrop eyes  
gleam with search.

Inside  
all swells  
and stretches  
fingerlike  
touching  
and the ache  
becomes all.

Then a golden leaf  
snapped free and falling  
drifts down  
to a tight-wire limb  
and gently quivers.

Mist music  
as taut as  
that branch  
undulates and suggests  
release  
to the captive breath.

Movement becomes yes.

## EXPRESSION

The image lies inert  
until quivering senses  
pluck the spotless  
from the dim.

The shapeless becomes shape,  
painfully.

The breath  
is boundless  
and sublime.

Space withers to a  
thing,  
time  
expressed.

Dulled,  
the mind's hands  
move and weave  
with dream-gestures.

Until the light of complete glows.

## THE IS OF THE WHERE

Two walk parallel  
through time and space  
until they reach the fork  
which lures each to the dissimilar.

Apart,  
each is touched  
by the is  
of the where,  
and what is singular.

The two paths wind  
and twine  
through the years  
until  
once again they converge.

Two walk parallel  
but unlike  
because they have been touched  
by the various.

Each bends outward,  
leans away toward  
question,  
anticipation,  
answer.

Now,  
they can never return  
to that pre-forked path  
and walk the true parallel.

## DEPRESSION

The heartbeat of care  
tears at the threads  
of strength  
and stifles the is.

Jagged words  
and smothered thoughts  
cut into the heart  
and muffle the mind.

Gone away,  
torn away,  
the sharing  
has blown  
away.

The stars sing a song  
and shimmer  
in a black sky.

I grasp  
the mist of dawn  
and  
cling to its strength.

## (Moving Fast, Slowly)

Moving fast, slowly  
minutes curl into the  
ashes of ages.

The gone todays  
and lost tomorrows  
wither the everyones.

The supreme  
has become forgotten  
in the grayness.

Time rolls and  
rocks, gently  
stealing life.

It lulls the ones  
into a state of half-closed eyes.

Then, an unwelcome  
but inevitable storm  
stirs the ashes  
frightening all into  
wakefullness.

The smoke vanishes  
and the needed stands  
in the clearing.

Eyes see and  
feel far  
as if  
for the first time.

The wind is stronger now.  
It expands and bellows.

The ashes are gone away  
and the wanted  
is remembered.

Seconds are whole  
and move fast.

Too fast.



## THE ROAD OF IS

The need is so great  
that to be  
falls  
along the road  
of is.

And,  
this need tears  
apart  
the one and the all.

Until  
questions and answers  
become  
smoke.

This intangible thing  
swirls  
but leads to  
no resolve.

Senses whirl gently,  
then frantically,  
then simmer  
to an echo.

The need is so great  
that  
the entire  
can only drift  
fearfully and waitfully.

The need will tear  
again and more  
on the is-way.

## (YOUR CALL IS LIKE)

Your call is like  
that of the silent sea.

Its glance touches  
deeper than any word.

To feel your presence  
is more gentle  
than the  
sound of your voice.

That is the essence  
of closeness  
and I seek no more.

Do not drown me  
in yourself  
because  
that is losing oneself.

If we move parallel  
then we neither  
go alone  
nor  
leave away.

The hereness of each  
fuses  
and we feel its force.

A glance says  
more than much  
and I look back to when  
words became nothing.

Tell me  
with your eyes  
the answer to being  
and I will  
move toward the sea  
and swim into its silence.